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# Meet Police Chief Matthew Clancy

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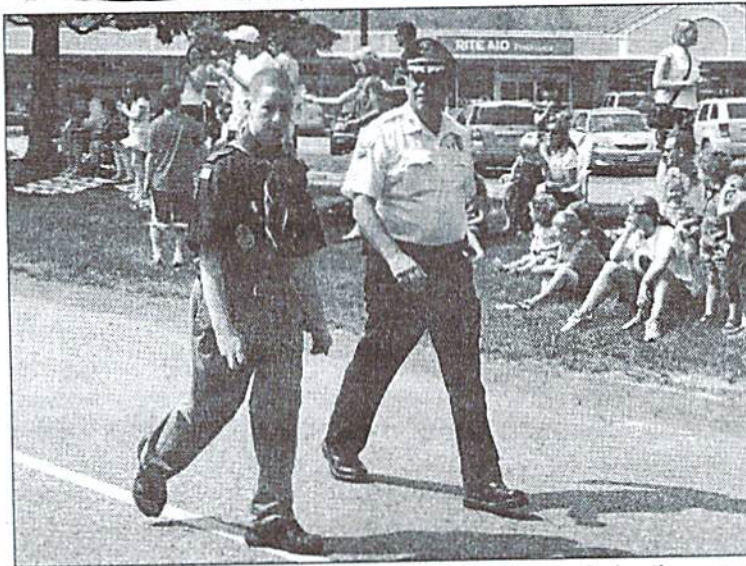
It sprang from a tragedy, but new Duxbury Police Chief Matthew Clancy said it was where he honed the leadership skills that would one day serve him as a chief.

When Clancy was a patrolman with the Mashpee Police Department, his sergeant was involved in a fatal shooting of a man who turned out to be the member of a prominent Wampanoag American Indian



Matthew Clancy is adjusting to life as Duxbury's new police chief.

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Clancy and local Eagle Scout Pat McLeod march in the recent Memorial Day Parade.



tribe. The shooting was ruled justified, as the man was trying to run down the officer with a car, but the incident tore open festering racial tensions and led to threats against police officers and angry protests.

"Even at the scene it was contentious," said Clancy. "This thing had to get resolved."

The Justice Department came to Mashpee to set up mediation sessions between the police department and the tribe. Clancy, then a patrolman, was appointed as one of the department's representatives. Through months of sometimes difficult sessions, the two sides started to come together and the community began to heal.

"Just sitting across the table, eventually relationships developed," Clancy said. "I look back at that as absolutely the most important work I've done in law enforcement."

Clancy, 47, was appointed Duxbury's newest police chief during a swearing-in ceremony at the Senior Center on May 3. He was previously the police chief in Plympton and has worked in Mashpee, Dennis, Braintree and Rockland.

Clancy doesn't come from a law enforcement family — they are mostly teachers — but he said he has always wanted to be a police officer.

"I was always awed by the local police officers," he said. "It almost sounds hokey, but they were the ones that righted the ship when there was a problem ... When folks were victimized, the police were always there to defend them."

Growing up in Rockland, one of his biggest inspirations was his school safety officer Angelo Umbriana, who would later become that town's police chief. When he became chief, he sat down with high school senior Clancy to talk about his possible future in law enforcement.

Clancy got a summer job working with the Dennis Police Department, which would develop in him a lifelong love of Cape Cod and smaller community police departments.

"Dennis is a special town," he said.

He eventually was appointed as a special police officer in Rockland (by Umbriana) and spent time in that town working dispatch, and with the school police force. He also spend time with the Braintree police force, but he knew he wanted to be a full-time officer.

Eventually, the position opened up in Mashpee.

Mashpee was an interesting town for police work, Clancy said. During his 17 years there, the department increased in size from 17 to 40 officers as the population exploded.

"The town grew leaps and

bounds," he said. "There were a lot of growing pains."

The population boom came with its share of problems, including the aforementioned tensions with the Wampanoag tribe, who felt like they were getting pushed out by new residents.

"It was a good experience," Clancy said of his time in Mashpee. "It sort of force fed you ... you had to learn how to talk to people."

Eventually Clancy, who considers himself a "goal-driven person," started to apply for chief jobs in smaller communities around the state. He was a semi-finalist for several jobs before the opportunity in Plympton arose.

"I thought, Plymouth County, home turf, that would be a perfect fit," he said.

He got the job in November of 2002 and started on Jan. 1. While he was excited to be stepping into his first role as a chief, there was a "learning curve," as he put it.

"I wasn't prepared for how small the department was," he said. "The chief in a small town becomes an expert in municipal police management because you do everything."

At the time, Clancy had a side business doing private security (he has since sold his stake) so he felt prepared to handle the budgetary responsibilities. What took him a bit by surprise, however, was the hands-on duties of a small town police chief. He often handled investigations personally, and was even hands-on around the office.

"You'd sometimes see me vacuuming floors," he said, adding that he's warned the staff at the Duxbury police station not to be offended if they see him emptying the trash barrels himself. "Hey, I'm here to work. Whatever they need me to do, I'll do."

Clancy was also walking into a bit of a difficult situation in Plympton.

"The department was woefully behind in things like best practices and policy," he said.

Like Duxbury, the Plympton Police Department was also dealing with an inadequate building situation. In Pl-

ympton, he tried not to set foot in the station until he had officially signed his contract — a practice he continued with the Duxbury job.

By the time he left Plympton, he had brought the department forward, including making some modifications to the building and starting a seniors/police collaboration called TRIAD. Clancy said the Carver/Plympton TRIAD is one of the most active in Plymouth County.

"I couldn't be prouder of a group of people," he said of his Plympton officers. "They bought into the program, they worked their fannies off."

In Duxbury, Clancy knows he is facing some challenges, especially in the wake of the contentious departure of former chief Mark DeLuca.

"The department has to heal," Clancy said. "There are still a lot of hurt feelings ... My greatest challenge will be to create an atmosphere where healing is possible."

He said he's taken care to assure the department's current staff that while he plans on making some changes, they will be done slowly and carefully.

The second priority is the state of the police station. Two attempts to build a new police station have passed Town Meeting but failed at the ballot box, and the department is still in limbo while the building deteriorates.

"I've got to quickly become the face of the building project and work tirelessly with the committee to move things forward," he said. "I can't see the building lasting another four years."

He said that the building is hurting morale by sending a message to police officers that they're not highly valued.

Yet, he said there's a lot to like about Duxbury (where he used to fish off the Powder Point Bridge as a kid) and the department itself.

"The real philosophy of community policing is going on here," he said. "The department here is engaged and we're going to expand that."